

## **Special Committee on Electoral Reform (ERRE)**

Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street  
House of Commons  
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

October 7, 2016

Hello ERRE

This is a report of a public meeting on electoral reform that was hosted by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada. Over fifty people attended, including members of PIPSC, Fair Vote Canada, CUPE, Lead Now, the Green Party of Canada, the Liberal Party of Canada, the New Democrat Party of Canada, the Pearson Centre, the Council of Canadians, and Every Vote Counts.

The speakers were:

- Alexandre Boulerice, NDP MP - Rosemont — La Petite-Patrie, Member of the Parliamentary Special Committee on Electoral Reform,
- Duff Conacher, Co-founder, Democracy Watch,
- Dr. Nathalie Des Rosiers, Dean, Faculty of Law, University of Ottawa, and
- Real Lavergne, National President, Fair Vote Canada.

The audience was made up of well informed citizens as well as people just starting to learn about electoral reform. Over the course of the evening, ideas and concerns were raised which I summarize here.

1. It became apparent that the Government should seek the opinion of the Supreme Court of Canada early in the process as well as during drafting and consulting on the new legislation rather than wait until it is tabled.
2. There was much discussion about mandatory voting, but the general consensus was that there were other, better mechanisms to encourage voter engagement and turnout.
3. By far, the preferred choice was some form of proportional representation. Open list Mixed Member Proportional was favoured over closed list MMP.
4. There was an understanding that the Canadian PR system would be a hybrid of at least two variants of PR to accommodate the differences between urban and rural/northern ridings.

5. On-line voting was discussed but there remained serious concerns about digital security and privacy.
6. There was a general understanding that good government requires that minority voices are heard and that majority 'rule' is intrinsically not democratic.
7. No one spoke in favour of a referendum and several spoke against it as an extreme form of majority rule, citing Brexit and provincial referenda on electoral reform.
8. We learned that PR systems have been shown to elect 7% more women and that countries with PR systems have better economic, human rights and environmental performance.
9. Numerous ideas were raised for improving democracy besides changes to voting, such as controls on election financing and corruption, and more ethical politics and transparency.
10. Thirty two participants signed on to a distribution list to learn more about electoral reform, indicating a keen interest in the topic.
11. Twenty nine of the participants completed the Fair Vote Canada questionnaire on this webpage:  
[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1zgBloMIJc\\_cNgyltB2jCU3ESC1yunnKmgFDmysuux\\_g/edit#responses](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1zgBloMIJc_cNgyltB2jCU3ESC1yunnKmgFDmysuux_g/edit#responses). Click on 'Responses' to see the results in graphic form.

Thank you for this opportunity for our whole group to voice our opinions and collective ideas arising from this event.

Democracy must continue to evolve in order to survive in our modern world. We ask you to take this opportunity to create a new kind of government that shares power equitably and works for the common good.

Submitted by Katie Oppen on behalf of the participants at the PIPSC Public Forum on Electoral Reform, October 4, 2016, Tom Brown Arena, 141 Bayview Road, Ottawa, Ontario.